

plan adopted by the French Commander-in-Chief in its initial stage, the French Government had proceeded to throw doubt on its soundness, though nothing had occurred in between to justify this change of attitude, and that such conduct was hardly fair to the man who had to execute the operations.

I said that I was of opinion that it must have been difficult for the French Government to ignore any arguments put before them by an officer of such high position as General Petain.

It was no doubt very disconcerting for a General on the eve of a great attack to have conclaves of politicians and of subordinate generals challenging, questioning and doubting his dispositions. Sometimes the debates were held at General Nivelle's Headquarters, sometimes he was hiked off to Paris, to explain and defend his dispositions. Not only must it have rattled the Commander-in-Chief, but it must also have had the effect of unnerving all the Generals who were to take part in the attack, and the atmosphere of distraction and divided counsel must have spread far and wide amongst those who had the responsibility for leading the attack on strongly entrenched positions.

The battle was viewed by a delegation of Members from the French Parliament, and there is no doubt that the break-off, which was the consequence of the failure to intervene, was attributable to politicians.

their intervention.
Some of the horrors inseparable from a
great battle were witnessed by them and
excited them
to a wail of exaggeration as to the
numbers of the
fallen.
The Generals appointed by the French
Govern-